



Audubon CONNECTICUT

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TESTIMONY OF AUDUBON CONNECTICUT  
SANDY BRESLIN, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING

FEBRUARY 2, 2009

*Audubon Connecticut, the state organization of the National Audubon Society with more than 10,000 members statewide, works to protect birds, other wildlife and their habitats using education, science and conservation, and legislative advocacy for the benefit of humanity and the earth's biological diversity.*

*Through our network of community-based nature centers, wildlife sanctuaries, and local volunteer Chapters, we seek to connect people with nature and inspire the next generation of conservationists.*

**IN SUPPORT OF S.B. 661 AN ACT EXPANDING THE BEVERAGE  
CONTAINER REDEMPTIONS PROVISION TO INCLUDE NONCARBONATED  
BEVERAGES.**

**Take Action to Increase the Recycling of Plastic Beverage Bottles**

Audubon Connecticut *strongly supports S.B. 661 AA Expanding the Beverage Container Redemption Provisions to Include Noncarbonated Beverages* that seeks to reduce litter and conserve resources by encouraging the recycling of water bottles and other noncarbonated, nonalcoholic and nondairy plastic bottles. We urge the Environment Committee to support the provisions of this bill including a *10 cent deposit fee* on these ubiquitous containers.

Connecticut's original "Bottle Bill" has had 30 years of remarkable success promoting the voluntary recycling of carbonated beverage bottles. During recent years, however, sales of plastic water bottles 1 liter or less have increased more than 115%, from 13 billion in 2002 to 27.9 billion in 2005 according to the Container Recycling Institute. With this rapid growth in the consumption of bottled water, juice, sports drinks and tea – much of it consumed outside the home – it is time to expand our original deposit legislation to include these containers. Increasing the deposit to 10 cents adds extra incentive for individuals to redeem their empty bottles. This move is one of the simplest and most effective steps we can take to improve our state's environment.

**Birds and wildlife: Swimming in a sea of plastic**

Plastic has become a significant and widespread pollutant. From urban centers to remote

corners of the globe, plastic debris permeates the natural environment. No where is this more true than in our waterways. Plastic is now found in virtually all the rivers and oceans of the world, even the most remote and once pristine. The beaches and waters of Long Island Sound are no exception. Plastic bottles are collected in great abundance during annual beach clean ups around the Sound.

Plastic trash is a mounting concern for seabirds and other marine wildlife. Washed out to sea by storms or thrown overboard by careless beachgoers or seafarers, plastic bottles bob on the surface of the Sound miles from shore until the combined action of wave, sun and salt break them down into tiny pieces. As these bottles disintegrate, they can be ingested by birds or other marine life causing a host of problems from blockages to ulcerations to starvation. Worldwide, more than 100 bird species are now known to ingest plastic particles.

Though scientific studies are not conclusive about how much plastic birds and fish are consuming, scientists do agree that plastic in seafood is likely to be harmful to people. Plastic can attract and bond to certain toxic substances such as persistent organic pollutants like DDT and PCBs, concentrating them at levels that are millions of times higher than found in the surrounding seawater. No one knows what happens when these pollutants travel up the food chain and land on our dinner plates.

### The Subtropical Gyres of the World

Scientists have identified five subtropical gyre systems (North Pacific Gyre, South Pacific Gyre, North Atlantic Gyre, South Atlantic Gyre and Indian Ocean Gyre) that make up 40 percent of the world's oceans. These swirling vortexes all contain sizeable amounts of floating plastic debris, and the North Pacific Gyre appears to be most polluted, with an estimated 150 million tons of plastic covering an area the size of Texas.

Oceanographer Charles Moore says the amount of plastic pollution in the world's oceans is so extensive that it is beyond cleaning up. In the North Pacific Gyre, a toxic plastic graveyard the size of Texas that swirls between San Francisco and Hawaii, Moore and his crew found that the ocean contains over 40 parts of plastic for every part plankton, with a fivefold increase in the amount of plastic between 1997 and 2007.

Audubon Connecticut *strongly urges* the Committee to expand Connecticut's Bottle Bill to include water, juice and other noncarbonated, nonalcoholic and nondairy plastic bottles, and to increase the bottle deposit fee to 10 cents.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this important matter with you today.